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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 2 June 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Huntley ..... (Saint Lucia)

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03-38274 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. The agenda was adopted.

Requests for hearing (aide-memoires 9/03 and 10/03)

2. **The Chairman** drew attention to a request for a hearing on the question of Gibraltar, contained in aide-memoire 9/03. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to accede to that request.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. **The Chairman** drew attention to a request for a hearing on the question of Western Sahara, contained in aide-memoire 10/03. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to accede to that request.

5. *It was so decided.*

Dissemination of information on decolonization (A/AC.109/2003/18; A/AC.109/2003/L.4-L.6)

6. **Ms. Gastaut** (Department of Public Information (DPI)) summarized for members of the Special Committee the report of the Secretary-General for the period from June 2002 to May 2003 on the dissemination of information on decolonization (A/AC.109/2003/18). She noted that, in the context of his reform efforts, the Secretary-General had reoriented the activities of the Department of Public Information on the premise that public information and communications must be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations, and that a culture of communications must pervade the Organization in order to help promote broad popular support for the United Nations.

7. **Ms. Theofilopoulou** (Department of Political Affairs (DPA)) said that, during the period under review, the Department of Political Affairs had collected information on the Territories by continuing to seek the cooperation of the administering Powers and to monitor the media and relevant web sites. It had also routinely collected, prepared and provided information on decolonization issues to Member States, representatives from the Territories, schools, organizations and individuals.

8. The DPI brochure entitled "The United Nations and Decolonization", drafted by the DPA Decolonization Unit in 2001, had been conceived as a response to the many queries received from individuals and organizations in the Non-Self-Governing Territories regarding the role of the United Nations in decolonization, the work of the Special Committee, the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the options available to the Territories with regard to their future status and the assistance for which the Territories were eligible. It provided factual information and relevant contact addresses. The brochure, which was proving to be a very useful information tool, was distributed widely at meetings of the Special Committee and at seminars held alternately in the Caribbean and Pacific regions. During the most recent seminar held in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Anguilla, brochure packages had been distributed to all the representatives of the Territories present and to those attending the meeting with Anguillan civil society. Through its Decolonization Unit, DPA had also continued to provide updated information to the DPI Public Inquiries Unit and Guided Tours Unit in response to specific questions about decolonization matters. Most recently, it had contributed to the updating of the decolonization maps on the third floor of the United Nations conference building, which were pointed out on guided tours and showed the world in 1945 and today, as well as to the updating of the chapter on decolonization in the DPI publication "Basic Facts about the United Nations".

9. DPA had continued to expand its roster of individual experts, academics and organizations concerned with decolonization and the situation of the Territories. Such a roster was helpful in inviting persons who would be able to contribute new insights, particularly experts in the region and on the region, to participate in the regional seminars. Those seminars provided a special opportunity for representatives of the Territories to obtain valuable information and to engage in networking. The lively discussions on self-determination held in Anguilla had been given ample media coverage in the region on the basis of highly professional press releases prepared by a DPI press officer. The Anguilla Seminar had also marked the very first time that the discussions had taken place within a Non-Self-Governing Territory in the presence of a senior-level representative of the administering Power. Another highlight of the Seminar had been the commitment undertaken by the authorities of the Territories to increase the dissemination of information

about self-determination options through civic education classes in schools and by other means. Moreover, the administering Power had given assurances that it would not object if the Special Committee worked with the peoples of the Caribbean Territories to facilitate public awareness campaigns concerning the self-determination options available to them. At regional seminars, the Decolonization Unit could also establish direct contact with representatives of United Nations programmes and other international organizations active in the region. For example, representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organization of American States (OAS) had been present at the Anguilla Seminar

10. In the context of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the Special Committee's continued progress in its consultations with several administering Powers to advance work programmes for decolonization, DPA, in close cooperation with DPI, would make every effort to anticipate needs and identify priorities to make the best possible use of the scarce resources available.

11. **Mr. Requeijo Gual** (Cuba) noted with great satisfaction that a DPI press release on the Caribbean Regional Seminar had been given full coverage in the Anguillan press and a parliamentary debate based on that same release had been aired on the local television station. It was disturbing, however, that both the local population in Anguilla and representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories at the Seminar seemed to be largely unaware of the work of the Special Committee and the United Nations system in general. As a member of the Committee on Information as well as the Special Committee, his delegation greatly appreciated the vigorous public education efforts being made by DPI but hoped they would be further strengthened to address the situation he had described.

12. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire) added that DPI and DPA efforts to disseminate information should target local populations in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, as they would one day be making choices about self-determination. To a great extent, those populations were still uninformed of their options, particularly the alternatives to full independence. The information campaigns should also be aimed at administering Powers, which tended to accord very low priority to decolonization. In the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there should be a common effort to move decolonization issues to the top of the international agenda.

13. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) welcomed the advances made at the Caribbean Regional Seminar, which his delegation had been unable to attend for reasons beyond its control. It was particularly gratifying that the issues before the Special Committee were now of concern to the entire international community and all levels of society, from academic circles to grass-root organizations. He paid tribute to the United Kingdom, the first administering Power ever to send a very high-level representative to a regional seminar held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, and hoped that other administering Powers would follow suit. It was extremely vital that the next Pacific regional seminar should be held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory in the Pacific. While praising the expanded activities of DPI and the excellent cooperation of both DPI and DPA with the Special Committee, he called for greater efforts to disseminate information on decolonization, which should receive the support of all entities in the United Nations system.

14. **Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas** (Bolivia) said that the Regional Seminar in Anguilla had constituted an important stage in the work of the Special Committee in that it had been the first such gathering to be held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory. He thanked the United Kingdom authorities for their cooperation as administering Power.

15. He echoed earlier speakers' concern that, with only seven years to go to the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there remained much for DPI and DPA to do in terms of informing the peoples and elected authorities of Non-Self-Governing Territories about their various options and how to proceed towards self-determination.

16. Despite ongoing budgetary restrictions, DPI and DPA should step up efforts to communicate more directly with the people in the Territories concerned using media such as radio and the Internet with a view to preventing misinformation. Given that bringing about an understanding of the implications of the various self-determination options was a long process, seven years seemed like a relatively short time frame. He asked how DPI assessed the impact of its work and the achievement of its objectives.

17. **Ms. Mulamula** (United Republic of Tanzania) agreed with the Cuban representative concerning the importance of disseminating information and the excellent work done by DPI in Anguilla. However, despite keen interest from civil society and local officials, the details of the Caribbean Regional Seminar had been released only one or two days before the mission's arrival. She also emphasized how vital it was to educate Non-Self-Governing Territories about their options for self-determination.

18. Recalling recent discussions within the Committee on Information, she asked whether DPI had feedback mechanisms for following up on target audiences and the impact of its communication efforts. She hoped that DPI and DPA had used the Anguilla Regional Seminar to establish contact networks with a view to channelling information. Although it was impossible for the United Nations to have a permanent presence in such Territories, there was a need to ensure that the United Nations message was heard by the peoples and the elected officials.

19. She had been encouraged at progress made in Secretariat departments in terms of gender mainstreaming. However, despite efforts made at Anguilla, it was obvious that departments' respective mandates sometimes limited coordination between them.

20. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea) said he agreed with previous statements concerning the importance of educating Non-Self-Governing Territories on their options. He thanked the representative of Fiji for the report he had provided to the Pacific Group on the Caribbean Regional Seminar in Anguilla and expressed support for the idea of holding the Pacific Regional Seminar in a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

21. He agreed with the Bolivian representative that more coordination was needed to ensure that the three options of independence, free association and integration were understood by the general population, which would be taking the decision. He also agreed on the importance of avoiding misinformation, stepping up communication efforts and establishing feedback mechanisms.

22. **Mr. Yauvoli** (Fiji) said that there were two lessons to be learned from the Regional Seminar in Anguilla. Firstly, the lack of information about the work of the Special Committee created a potential for misinformation, made it difficult to obtain the relevant information and resulted in a lack of confidence. Secondly, the constructive engagement of the administering Powers was essential. He supported the suggestion that the Pacific Regional Seminar should be held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

23. **The Chairman** agreed that information should be targeted at the general population and said he hoped that a specific programme would be set up as a result of discussions with DPI.

24. **Ms. Gastaut** (Department of Public Information) said that the question of assessment had been at the centre of discussions held during the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Information. Indeed, results-based assessment had replaced the analysis of activities in all Secretariat departments. The Department was therefore developing criteria to assess the impact of its work. Reports on media coverage already assessed the Department's impact but that was mainly anecdotal and a more systematic approach was needed. Reports in 2004 should detail progress in that regard. In the meantime, all comments would be conveyed to the Under-Secretary-General.

25. **The Chairman** drew attention to the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2003/L.4 and invited the Special Committee to adopt it without a vote.

26. **Mr. Acuña** (Chile) suggested the inclusion at the end of the first paragraph of the phrase "in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations on decolonization".

27. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2003/L.4, as orally amended, was adopted without a vote.*

28. **The Chairman** announced that the Special Committee had completed its consideration of the item.

Question of information from Non-Self-Governing Territories, transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/58/69; A/AC.109/2003/L.5)

29. **The Chairman** drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/69) containing information provided by the administering Powers under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. That information enabled the Special Committee to make a thorough study of the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

30. He also drew attention to the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2003/L.5 and invited the Special Committee to adopt it without a vote.

31. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2003/L.5 was adopted without a vote.*

32. **The Chairman** announced that the Special Committee had completed its consideration of the item.

Question of sending visiting missions to Territories (A/AC.109/2003/L.6)

33. **The Chairman** drew attention to the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2003/L.6, and invited the Special Committee to adopt it without a vote.

34. **Mr. Acuña** (Chile) suggested the inclusion at the end of the first and second paragraphs of the phrase "in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations on decolonization".

35. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2003/L.6, as orally amended, was adopted without a vote.*

36. **The Chairman** announced that the Special Committee had completed its consideration of the item.

Organization of work

37. **The Chairman** suggested that, in accordance with past practice, the Special Committee should authorize the Rapporteur to reformulate its draft resolutions and draft decisions in General Assembly format at the time when the reports of the Committee were prepared for submission to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

38. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

39. **The Chairman** informed members of the Committee that he had received communications from Kevin Young, the representative of Pitcairn, Dr. Carlyle Corbin, the representative of the United States Virgin Islands and Aliki Faipule Kolouei O'Brien, Ulu of Tokelau, containing requests to participate in the work of the Special Committee. They were also requesting the Committee to facilitate their participation through the reimbursement by the United Nations of the expenses incurred in that regard, in accordance with the guidelines amended by the Committee and approved by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session (A/AC.109/L.1791, annex, and A/AC.109/L.1804) and the procedure established at the Special Committee's meeting on 3 June 2002 (A/AC.109/2002/SR.3). If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee approved the funding of those representatives, subject to available funds, and authorized the Secretariat to make the necessary administrative arrangements.

40. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.